

Sub B
A 1

1. (Amended) A method of staining a biological specimen with a histological stain, wherein the specimen is treated by a process comprising the steps of:
- (a) dispensing onto a biological specimen an oxidizer; and
 - (b) dispensing onto the biological specimen a source of hydrogen ions, whereby the oxidizer combines with hydrogen ions and the combination of oxidizer and hydrogen ions contacts the biological specimen, thereby treating the biological specimen.

Sub B3
A 2

10. (Amended) A method for detecting the presence or absence of microorganisms in a biological specimen in an automated histological staining process, comprising the steps of:
- (a) treating the biological specimen with a staining reagent wherein the treatment comprises dispensing from separate liquid dispensers, onto the biological specimen, a source of chromate ions and a source of hydrogen ions, thereby combining chromate ions and hydrogen ions, wherein the combination of chromate ions and hydrogen ions contacts the biological specimen;
 - (b) washing the combination of chromate ions and hydrogen ions from the specimen;
 - (c) staining the washed specimen with a histological stain suitable for the detection of microorganisms; and,
 - (d) detecting the presence or absence of microorganisms in the specimen.

A 3
Sub B5

- 16 (Amended) A method of staining a biological specimen in an automated histological staining procedure, wherein the biological specimen is treated by a process comprising the steps of:
- (a) combining a source of chromate ions and a source of hydrogen ions; and
 - (b) contacting the combination of (a) with the biological specimen, thereby treating the biological specimen.